



Buckman
Water
Diversion
Project EIS

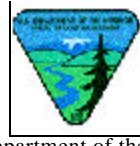
August 5, 2002

Subject: Buckman Water
Diversion Project
Public Input

Dear Community Member:



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service, Santa Fe National Forest
Española Ranger District



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Taos Resource Area

The Española Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest (FS) and Bureau of Land Management Taos Field Office (BLM) are considering the issuance of a special-use permit to City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County and Las Campanas Limited Partnership (collectively referred to as the applicants) for the construction and operation of a Rio Grande water diversion facility and associated infrastructure. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the BLM and FS are preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for this proposal, the No-Action Alternative, and other possible alternatives. This notice solicits public and agency input on environmental issues and concerns associated with the proposal as required under NEPA. The BLM and FS decision on whether or not to issue the requested permit will be based on the EIS analysis.

Issuance of a special use permit would authorize the construction and operation of a facility and associated infrastructure (sediment ponds, pump stations and pipelines) on Federal lands that would enable the annual withdrawal and diversion of approximately 8,750 acre-feet of water from the Rio Grande. The project would allow the applicants to make more direct use of their existing water rights. Currently, these water rights are used to offset groundwater pumping.

Most of the water involved in this project is imported into the Rio Grande basin through the San Juan-Chama Project. Estimated water diversion quantities used for the analysis will be based on annual demand projections that extend to the year 2010 for the City and County, while the demand for Las Campanas is projected for a longer period (e.g. to community build out). These projections translate to approximately 8,750 acre-feet per year (afy), currently estimated to be 5,230 afy for the City; 1,700 afy for the County; and 1,800 afy for Las Campanas. The proposed diversion facility is sized for a combined net peak diversion of approximately 28.2 cubic feet per second.

The proposed diversion location along with two associated sedimentation ponds is near the western terminus of Buckman Road within the northern tip of the "Caja del Rio" portion of the Santa Fe National Forest, approximately 15 miles northwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico. From the diversion location approximately 37 miles of pipeline and 3 associated pump stations will be constructed primarily in existing right-of-ways. Additionally, in order to treat the raw water to safe drinking water standards two water treatment plants are proposed: one located on private land and one located on land leased by the City from the BLM for its municipal recreation complex. Refer to attached map for the project area and approximate facility location.



Preliminary issues include the following:

- Impacts (both beneficial and adverse) to water resources.
- Impacts of construction to existing infrastructure (roads, powerlines, buried utilities)
- Impacts to fish and aquatic habitats.
- Impacts to recreation use, including river guides, as well as the scenic resources associated with the area.
- Impacts of traffic. This includes short-term increases caused by construction traffic as well longer-term increases in traffic resulting from proposed road improvements.

In addition to evaluating these preliminary issues, the environmental evaluation will assess the potential effects that the proposed project may have on Indian trust assets, as well as assessing the potential effects that the proposed project may have on minority and low-income populations. Economic impacts of the proposed action as well as no action will be considered, as will other social considerations.

The scoping period for this analysis began July 22, 2002, and extends through September 4, 2002. **In support of the scoping effort, the FS and BLM will host public scoping meetings on the proposal and NEPA process on August 20, 2002, from 3-5 p.m. at the Sweeney Center in Santa Fe, NM and on August 29, 2002, from 7-9 p.m. at the Sweeney Center in Santa Fe, NM. A 30-minute open house will precede each meeting time.** A project map is attached for your review and consideration.

Comments should be in writing and delivered or postmarked no later than September 4, 2002 to be considered. Please address your written comments to Mr. Sandy Hurlocker, NEPA Coordinator, USDA-FS, Española Ranger District, P.O. Box 3307, Española, New Mexico 87533. Electronic mail (e-mail) may be sent to shurlocker@fs.fed.us and FAX may be sent to (505) 753-9411. For further information contact: Sandy Hurlocker, NEPA Coordinator, Española Ranger District, (505) 753-7331.

Sincerely,

John P. Miera
Española District Ranger

Ron Hunt singer
Field Office Manager, Taos Field Office